



# 2003 USDA Data Users Meeting

October 20, 2003

Holiday Inn Mart Plaza

## Agenda

**12:00 p.m. Registration/Demonstrations**

**1:00 Introduction and Overview**

Rich Allen  
National Agricultural Statistics Service

**1:05 Agency reviews**

John Van Dyke  
Agricultural Marketing Service

Venita Powell  
Census Bureau - Foreign Trade Division

Janet Perry  
Economic Research Service

Randy Zeitner  
Foreign Agriculture Service

Steve Wiyatt  
National Agricultural Statistics Service

Gerald Bange  
World Agricultural Outlook Board

**1:30 Special Presentation - Commodity Market Information System - Milton Eriksen & Gerald Bange, WAOB**

**2:00 Open forum for questions and comments from participants**

**3:15 Break**

**3:30 Open forum continued**

**5:00 Concluding comments**

**5:05 - Demonstration period - ERS & WAOB**



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United States  
Department of  
Agriculture

Agricultural  
Marketing  
Service

STOP 0201 – Room 3071-S  
1400 Independence Avenue, SW.  
Washington, DC 20250

## Agricultural Marketing Service

### 2003

The Agricultural Marketing Service includes six commodity programs—Cotton, Dairy, Fruit and Vegetable, Livestock and Seed, Poultry, and Tobacco. The programs employ specialists who provide standardization, grading, and market news services for those commodities. They enforce such Federal Laws as the Perishable Agricultural Commodities Act and the Federal Seed Act.

AMS commodity programs also oversee marketing agreements and orders, administer research and promotion programs, and purchase commodities for Federal food programs.

#### **CURRENT ISSUES OF INTEREST**

##### **MANDATORY PRICE REPORTING:**

The Livestock Mandatory Reporting Act of 1999 (Act) contains a five year sunset provision. This requires that Congress take some action by October 2004 or livestock mandatory reporting will be discontinued. Industry must determine if they want to retain mandatory reporting and if it is retained recommend changes in the Act and the regulations that could improve data collection.

##### **AUTOMATIC E-MAIL DELIVERY OF COMMODITY MARKET NEWS REPORTS:**

Through a partnership with the Albert R. Mann Library at Cornell University, USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service now has the capability for "push technology" that allows automatic electronic mail delivery. The service is free and subscribers may receive as many of the more than 600 daily, weekly and monthly reports on the prices and sales of hundreds of agricultural commodities as they request.

To subscribe to any cotton, dairy, fruit and vegetable, livestock and seed, poultry or tobacco Market News report, link to the e-mail subscription Web site from the AMS Market News Web site: [www.ams.usda.gov](http://www.ams.usda.gov) or go directly to: <http://usda-reports.mannlib.cornell.edu>

##### **WEB PORTAL PROJECT:**

The Market News portal for access to fruit and vegetable data is near completion and is currently going through the testing phase. The portal promises to significantly enhance the level of customer service in a number of ways. Among these, the portal will provide: direct access by our users to the Market News Information System or the database, the ability to customize the site to meet the individual needs of the customer, and options for downloadable formats for Market News reports or data. It is anticipated that the public will have access to the production system in the spring of 2004. Data for livestock and grain are the next commodities to be made available through the portals access.

##### **MARKET INFORMATION ORGANIZATION OF THE AMERICAS:**

The Market Information Organization of the Americas (MIOA), which was a concept proposed by AMS, continues to move forward, most recently by aligning its efforts with the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture.

This institute was created to provide (1) technical assistance, (2) agricultural research, and (3) trade promotion directed by secretaries or ministers of agriculture representing all the countries of the Americas. The institute's board of directors readily agreed to this alliance because its goals fit so well with the ideals of MIOA.

MIOA will promote direct linkages between the market information systems of the participating countries. In addition, application of standard language and procedures throughout the Americas will permit the sharing of information.

### **GLOBAL MARKET REPORTING:**

Congress provided supplemental funding to AMS Market News in 2003 to strengthen its ability to track critical international agricultural markets. Market News is just beginning to use the funds to provide the information that the U.S. industry needs: (1) to identify markets of opportunity, (2) assess competing suppliers, and (3) link with our counterparts in other nations.

### **ORGANIC DATA:**

AMS has recently responded to the rapid increase in organic farming by streamlining its Information System to enhance the entry and retrieval of organic data.

Modifications to the system now make it easier for reporters to input data for organically grown fruits and vegetables. The modifications also make it easier for that data to be retrieved and managed both by our reporters and our customers.

This change was instituted in response to many requests from the organic community for more data and easier access to it. As more marketers and shippers add organic product lines, we see in the coming days more reporting of key markets for shipping point or point-of-entry for imports.

## **CHANGES TO AMS REPORTS AND NEW REPORTS**

### **Cotton:**

All reports are provided in PDF format

Bale-by-bale quality and trading data from TheSeam, the premier cotton on-line trading firm, is being transmitted electronically to generate recaps. This provides access to off-hour trades.

### **Fruit and Vegetable:**

New market coverage initiated for the following commodities:

Mexico/California - blackberries

Washington/Oregon - rhubarb

Caribbean Imports - pineapples

Westside California, San Joaquin Valley - cantaloupes

Central California - bok choy, nappa, snow peas

Oxnard, California - cabbage, romaine, leaf lettuce, broccoli, cilantro, parsley

Arizona/California - spinach

California/Mexico - cilantro, parsley

Mexico - radishes

California - blueberries

Michigan – squash

**Livestock and Grain:**

A voluntary direct trade slaughter steer and heifer report was developed in February 2003 to supplement the mandatory direct trade reports. Information is collected from feedlots in Nebraska, Kansas, and the Texas/Oklahoma Panhandle. The voluntary report provides timely information as trading occurs throughout the day.

Daily and weekly cow beef cuts and trimmings reports are being prepared using data collected through the mandatory livestock reporting program.

Over 50 daily and weekly summary reports in pdf format have been developed. These reports provide producers and other industry members with a quick review of current market conditions and prices. For more detailed information data links are provided to individual reports and graphs.

To assist users who use market news data for extensive analysis and historical comparison of trends and prices, eight nationally significant reports are provided in a CSV format. This allows users to directly download information into a spreadsheet or database.

A Data Mart is being developed for livestock and meat information that is collected through the mandatory livestock reporting program. This will provide users direct access to published data and allow them to configure a request for information on a one time basis to address specific needs or for the same data on a reoccurring basis to run long term comparative analysis on livestock and meat markets. The data mart should be available in the summer of 2004.

**Poultry:**

In January 2003, most of the city-based reports of cartoned egg prices were replaced with regional based reports that include the Northeast, Southeast, Midwest, and South Central regions. The following egg reports were deleted: 12-Metro Area egg, Major Louisiana Cities Eggs, Jackson Eggs, Midwest Eggs, Cartoned Egg Prices, Southern Egg, and Houston Egg.

In January 2003, the reporting of prices for light-type hens was changed to reflect producer removal costs per bird.

In January 2003, Poultry Market News combined Cleveland and Cincinnati negotiated truck lots sales of broiler/fryers delivered to first receivers into a single quote under Ohio Cities.

In October 2002, Poultry Market News office developed a one-page weekly report that contains market information important to small-volume poultry distributors in the upper mid-west. The report is available every Tuesday morning and is faxed or e-mailed to the trade. This report joins a family of one-page Poultry Market News Branch reports targeted to specific segments of the poultry trade.

A weekly report is being developed to show the volume and prices for whole and cut-up young broiler/fryers without necks or giblets (WOGS) delivered into the Central Region of the United States. The report will include transactions booked for current week deliveries and will likely be released on Mondays. The new report will be primarily designed for marketing managers in quick serve restaurants and retail grocers who prepare in-store ready-to-eat meals.

A weekly report is being developed to cover trading of USDA Certified Organic poultry and eggs and their respective products with an anticipated release date of January 2004.

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### ***MARKET NEWS CONTACTS***

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Tobacco Market News – Henry Martin – 202/205-0337; [henry.martin@usda.gov](mailto:henry.martin@usda.gov)

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## FOREIGN TRADE DIVISION

Each month the Foreign Trade Division of the United States Census Bureau (Census) releases the “U.S. International Trade in Goods and Services “ report which is one of the principal economic indicators for the United States. This report along with other information can be found on our Web site at: [www.census.gov/foreign-trade](http://www.census.gov/foreign-trade) Information available includes:

- “U.S. International Trade in Goods & Services,” current and historical issues
- Information on the Automated Export System (AES)
- Schedule B commodity classification search
- Export and import statistics by country or commodity
- U.S. foreign trade export regulations

### WHAT’S NEW?

- **Mandatory Filing- Effective April 2004 all Shippers’s Export Declarations (SED’s) must be filed electronically.**
- **Structure Modifications - Beginning with January 2004 statistics, the U.S. Census Bureau will expand the country subcode field and the US-goods field to 2 characters in several import data products. This expansion will accommodate the increasing number of special trade act agreements and align the U.S. Census Bureau data products with the trade agreement designation in the Harmonized Tariff Schedule (HTS) and with the U.S. Customs and Border Protection agency’s import filing system. For more information or questions, please contact the U.S. Census Bureau at (301)763-2311 or e-mail at [ftd.data.dissemination@census.gov](mailto:ftd.data.dissemination@census.gov).**

### DATA QUALITY

In order for Census to accurately analyze, review, correct and publish quality statistics, we continuously interact with other government agencies. Census and USDA have established a working group which established liaisons within each agency to communicate and attempt to resolve data discrepancies in a timely manner. Because of this working relationship, Census with assistance from USDA was able to reduce the large data discrepancies in the soybeans statistics published by the two agencies. In addition, staff from Census and USDA visited U.S. Customs, the Federal Grain and Inspections (FGIS) and a major U.S. grain corporation in an attempt to better understand the organization, operations and processes of each agency.

## DATA COMPILATION

- Automated Export System (AES)- developed as a joint venture of the U.S. Customs Service, the Census Bureau, other Federal agencies and the exporting community to electronically capture the Shipper's Export Declaration (SED) information and the Carrier Outbound Manifest data.
  - *AESDirect* - The Census' free Internet-based system for filing Shipper's Export Declaration (SED) through the Automated Export System (AES). The AES is an electronic alternative to filing the paper SED. Currently there are 8,200 AESDirect participants.
  - *AESPCLink* - The latest of a series of enhancements to the Census Bureau's Internet filing site, AESDirect. AESPCLink allows any AESDirect filer to create their SEDs off-line and connect to AESDirect using the Internet to submit their SEDs.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

Visit our Website at: [www.census.gov/foreign-trade](http://www.census.gov/foreign-trade)  
Visit the AES Website at: [www.customs.gov/aes](http://www.customs.gov/aes) or [www.aesdirect.gov](http://www.aesdirect.gov)  
Visit NAICS Website at: [www.census.gov/naics](http://www.census.gov/naics)

Foreign Trade Data Products:  
**(301) 763-2227 or Fax: (301) 457-2647**

Correspondence can be written or faxed to:  
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U.S. Census Bureau  
Washington, D.C. 20233-0001  
**Fax: (301) 457-1159**

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**AESDirect Help Desk**

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**Inquiries about our published statistics can be written, E-mailed, or faxed to:**

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**FOREIGN TRADE  
STATISTICS** YOUR KEY  
TO TRADE  
U. S. CENSUS BUREAU



*ERS strives to provide product consistency and improve the transparency of our work to the general public. We're enhancing the value-added nature of our work, strengthening ties between research and outlook, and working more closely with our inter-agency USDA partners.*

### **Improved Quality of Communication**

**Newsletters**—Periodic reports are posted to the ERS website with notifications of additional articles and reports sent to subscribers. Included in the list of commodity reports are *Fruit and Tree Nuts*, *Sugar and Sweeteners*, and *Vegetable and Melons*. All reports—including field crops (wheat, feed, cotton and wool, oil crops, and rice) and livestock (meat, dairy, and poultry)—will follow the same schedule in 2004 as in past years.

**E-Outlooks**—E-outlook reports provide additional context to the information provided in the monthly newsletters. We've published more than a dozen reports in 2003 covering topics such as interstate livestock movements, pork policies in Japan, and China's exports after 1 year of WTO membership. Look for e-outlooks on analyzing price spreads for beef and pork, forecasting counter-cyclical payments for corn, international wheat markets, country of origin labeling, and more.

**Agriculture and Trade Reports**—These reports are longer reports that complement our newsletters and e-outlooks and bring together the best of our research and outlook programs. We plan to soon release reports on EU-U.S. policy comparisons; India's poultry market; middle income countries' decisions to grow feed, animals, or both; as well as other topics.

**Technical Assistance Projects**—Our technical assistance projects continue to provide us with valuable insights into developing markets for U.S. commodities. We have on-going projects in India (poultry, pulses, and oilseeds), China (wheat, rice, and soybeans), and Mexico (corn and hogs).

**More User-Friendly Baseline**—ERS works with WAOB and other agencies to provide access to key baseline data and information in a timely manner. A streamlined baseline document and related web materials are posted in early February through our baseline briefing room. Baseline information includes macroeconomic and policy assumptions and projections for agricultural commodities, agricultural trade, and aggregate indicators of the sector, such as farm income and food prices.

**Model Transparency Guidelines Developed**—We have a team of researchers developing guidelines which will make our data gathering and modeling efforts more transparent and easier to understand. These guidelines are being developed to meet requirements that ensure the objectivity, quality, and integrity of the information we provide to the public, as well as provide release of information that permits users to better understand and critique our work.



**Trade Policy**—ERS publishes web pages that provide links to FAS's FATUS and PS&D databases, and we provide key information in the context of our commodity and country briefing rooms, but rely on FAS for the underlying data. Recently, a new database covering WTO agricultural trade policy commitments was posted on the ERS website, with information (by country and commodity aggregate) on export subsidy and domestic support notifications and WTO tariff levels.

**E-Government Top 10 Website**—ERS's website was recently rated as a top 10 government website. Our website provides electronic access to everything that the agency does through our briefing rooms, publications, and data products. We are making it easier for users to find our commodity and markets information through a new Outlook page and a new Data page. Our Outlook Calendar is posted to the web so that you can find out when we plan to release products. And you can receive weekly announcements of our latest reports and other news as shown on the ERS calendar. We have posted or soon will post new briefing rooms on Animal Production and Marketing Issues, Floriculture, and Japan. *Are there others that you would like to see?*

**ERS Flagship Publication**—*Amber Waves* magazine debuted in 2003 and offers a window into the broad range of ERS research and analysis. Food, farming, natural resources, and rural America are covered. On-line and print editions are available. Recent articles include multilateralism versus regionalism, factors affecting global competitiveness, how the tobacco industry is responding to new competitors, and similarities between the hog and poultry industries.

### **New Initiatives**

**Agricultural Resource Management Study (ARMS)**—Sponsored jointly by ERS and NASS, ARMS is USDA's primary source of information on the financial condition, production practices, resource use, and economic well being of America's farm households. Additional funding will expand the sample size of the survey to underpin the work on the economics of farm households and farm businesses, and to restore coverage for cost of production (COP) surveys. In fall 2003, the COP survey will cover sorghum, barley, and cotton. In 2004, USDA will survey wheat, hog, and peanut operations.

**Food Consumption Data Study**—USDA has asked the Committee on National Statistics (CNSTAT) of the National Research Council to begin a review of USDA's food consumption and nutrition data infrastructure. ERS's role is in analyzing consumer preferences and trends affecting food consumption choices, diet and health, and in partnering with HHS and other federal agencies to build the food consumption and nutrition information base. Plans are being made for a scoping workshop, which will help develop a plan to address issues of concern.

**Per Capita Consumption Information**—ERS food and commodity analysts are working together to refine estimates of U.S. per capita food consumption based on the historical food supply (aka disappearance) series that goes back to 1909. The first commodity group to be the focus of our new enhancement activities will be grains. As part of this effort, ERS will sponsor a grain-based food consumption workshop in 2004 to understand market and dietary developments affecting demand and to address methodological and data needs and issues. ERS analysts are seeking and welcome input from industry experts.

**Questions or Comments? Please address them to:**

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## NATIONAL AGRICULTURAL STATISTICS SERVICE STATISTICS DIVISION

### *WHAT'S NEW, WHAT'S CHANGED, & WHAT'S COMING?*

**NASS Mission Statement: To provide timely, accurate, and useful statistics in service to U.S. Agriculture.**

#### **Crops**

NASS updated its policy regarding the utilization of the Farm Service Agency (FSA) certified acreage information. NASS reviewed FSA certified acreage information for the October 10 *Crop Production* report and updates resulting from this review, to planted and harvested acreage for spring planted crops, were published in the October *Crop Production* report. Previously, FSA information was reviewed along with end of year survey information, and planted area estimates were updated as needed. This policy was changed since FSA certified acreage data are now available nearly two months earlier than in the past. NASS will continue to use FSA certified acreage information to update rice and cotton acreage during the September *Crop Production* report.

Revisions of previous year peanut acreage, yield, and production estimates are now published in the October *Crop Production* report. NASS changed the timing from the April *Crop Production* report due to the present longer marketing period for peanuts. Additionally, market year average prices for peanuts are now published in the August *Agricultural Prices* report, instead of April.

NASS redefined the burley tobacco estimation program and no longer forecasts burley tobacco acreage, yield, and production in the December *Crop Production* report. Final production estimates continue to be published for all types of tobacco in the annual *Crop Production* report, released each January.

NASS released a special analysis of the adoption of corn biotechnology in 10 major corn producing States. NASS began monitoring U.S. corn crop biotechnology adoption in 2000. Tables in this special analysis provide information on the number of farms planting Bt corn and Bt acreage by percent of corn area reported as planted with Bt varieties.

NASS added a new potato size and grade table for major potato producing States in the January 2003 *Potato Stocks* report. This new data series was added at the request of the potato industry. Size and grade measurements come from potatoes harvested in Potato Objective Yield Survey sample plots. Potatoes are sized and graded according to accepted U.S. fresh grading standards.

## **Environmental, Economics, and Demographics**

NASS has entered into a cooperative agreement with the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and the Farm Service Agency to conduct the Conservation Effects Assessment Project (CEAP). The CEAP will be conducted in the Fall of each year from 2003 through 2007, the life of the 2002 Farm Bill. The CEAP will provide the data for models which will output scientifically defensible assessments of the environmental benefits of conservation programs. These programs include the Environmental Quality Incentives Program, Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP), Wetland Reserve Program, Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program, and NRCS Conservation Technical Assistance.

The CEAP will provide an accounting of the environmental benefits obtained from conservation program expenditures. Data on CRP and CREP, conservation practices and program participation, cropping and tillage history, pesticide and fertilizer applications, manure use, irrigation, field operations, and confinement livestock operations, will be collected in 48 States on 9,600 sampled fields from NRCS's National Resources Inventory sampling frame.

The Agricultural Resource Management Survey (ARMS) is USDA's primary vehicle for collecting data about production practices, inputs, farm costs, and financial conditions. This year's release of the *Farm Production Expenditures*, which is a product of the ARMS, had expanded Economic Sales Classes for 2002 and 2001. A special report titled *Corn, Soybeans, and Wheat Sold Through Marketing Contracts 2001 Summary* was released February 2003. This report, also a product from ARMS, includes information on marketing contracts at the U.S. and Regional levels by Economic Sales Classes and by Farm Production Region. This report was developed to help identify changes in the structure of the Nation's grain and oilseed markets.

In August 2003, the annual *Agricultural Land Values* and *Agricultural Cash Rents* reports were combined into one report, *Agricultural Land Values and Cash Rents*.

## **Livestock**

Beginning in January 2003, the *Livestock Slaughter* report and *Poultry Slaughter* report were moved to an 8:30 a.m. release time at the request of industry.

NASS added a new table to the June 2003 *Chickens and Eggs* report for table egg layers in flocks of 75,000 and above, by Region and U.S. Included in the table are inventory and eggs laid per 100 layers on the first of the month. The reference period for all items is December 1 the previous year.

Monthly *Cold Storage* releases include a new data series for chicken parts. Chicken parts, which were published as a total, are now broken out by type. The new categories are: breasts and breast meat; drumsticks; leg quarters; thigh and thigh quarters; thigh meat; wings (all products); and paws and feet.

Color class definitions were changed in the annual *Mink* report for 2002 based on industry requests. Data under the new color class definitions were published for pelt products and females bred to produce kits.

A special report, *U.S. Broiler Industry Structure*, was issued November 2002. This report contains a summary of the changes in the structure of the U.S. broiler industry from 1934 to present. The report is available on the NASS website or directly from [//usda.mannlib.cornell.edu/reports/nassr/poultry/industry-structure/](http://usda.mannlib.cornell.edu/reports/nassr/poultry/industry-structure/).

Weekly and annual totals, for broiler-type chick eggs set and chicks placed by State and U.S., are now available in *QuickStats* on the NASS website back to 1981.

The monthly *Catfish Processing* report now includes data on fresh catfish fillet exports. This began in April with the release of January and February data.

The weekly *Broiler Hatchery* report now includes Louisiana data separate from the combined States category. The change was made in the May 14, 2003, report.

The monthly *Dairy Products* release now includes data for U.S. sour cream production. This began in April, with data published since January 2003.

The monthly *Cattle on Feed* report was modified in February 2003 to exclude calculation and publication of the historical 7-State total. The 7-State data can be calculated from the U.S. release by summing the individual States. U.S. monthly estimates have been available since 1996.

The monthly *Hogs and Pigs* report was discontinued with the August release. The continued deterioration in response rates impacted the monthly survey by causing an increasingly greater portion of the survey data to be estimated.

## **2002 Census of Agriculture**

The 2002 Census of Agriculture data are being analyzed and will be released in 2004. NASS historical revisions will follow the release of the census data.



# Fact Sheet

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## *Accessing Global Commodity Information from USDA's*

### *Foreign Agricultural Service*

Market intelligence lies at the root of the Foreign Agricultural Service (FAS) effort to promote exports. FAS acquires data from satellite imagery, foreign statistics, and through its global network of offices in over 130 countries. In Washington, DC, FAS' Commodity and Marketing Program (CMP) has the responsibility to analyze this information along with the World Agricultural Outlook Board, Economic Research Service and other USDA agencies, to publish short term world production, supply and demand estimates on a monthly basis. FAS commodity knowledge supports USDA on issues of market access, food aid, export credits, and technical assistance and provides a source of unbiased information for the market.

#### **FAS Online and New Data Products**

You can tap into the FAS information network of agricultural counselors, attachés, and trade officers stationed abroad, and analysts, marketing specialists, negotiators, and related specialists in Washington, DC through the Internet at: <http://www.fas.usda.gov>. Each of the nine CMP Divisions maintain and update their own web sites with analysis, circulars, and timely news items, often related to market access or competitive issues faced by U.S. exporters.

**U.S. Trade Database Online:** USDA has released a searchable, web-based U.S. export and import trade system with data for agricultural, fishery, and forestry products. This dynamic web based system is designed to service frequent requests for trade data from farmers; industry associations; federal, congressional and state officials; university researchers; and journalists. The new database is searchable at any level of the Harmonized Tariff Schedule of the United States. Since initial implementation, many user-requested features have been added to the application to provide increased flexibility and enhance system capability. Clicking on areas within the body of the report accesses some of these new features. Some features are activated from the toolbar across the bottom of the output. Find US Trade Online at: <http://www.fas.usda.gov/ustrade/>

**PS&D Online:** USDA's Production, Supply and Demand forecasts are now online in a web-enabled browser. This new database gives users the capability to instantly access and download USDA forecasts after lockup and provides faster electronic access to forecasts, including fruits and vegetables that are not part of USDA's lockup procedures. Users may select from a menu of pre-defined tables categorized by commodity or by commodity group, or create custom queries for specific commodities, attributes and/or countries. The system enables you to view queried data on screen or download it as a file that you can open with your spreadsheet or database program. A yearly release schedule allows users to pre-plan data availability. Use this system at: <http://www.fas.usda.gov/psd/>

**USDA's Crop Explorer Helps Analysts Track AgroMeteorological Data Worldwide:** A new on-line web site, Crop Explorer, provides easy-to-read crop condition information for most agricultural regions in the world. With this data, U.S. and international producers, traders, researchers, and the public can access weather and satellite information used by agricultural economists and scientists who predict crop production worldwide. The site includes more than 9,500 charts and pages. Weather and satellite data are updated every ten days. The crop explorer site can be found at internet address: <http://www.fas.usda.gov/pecad>. Click on Crop Explorer. For further information, please contact the Production Estimates and Crop Assessment Division at (202) 720-0888 or [pecad@fas.usda.gov](mailto:pecad@fas.usda.gov)

### **World Production, Market and Trade Reports (Circulars)**

The *World Market and Trade Reports* provide the latest analysis and data on a number of agricultural commodities, outlining the current supply, demand and trade estimates for the United States and many major foreign countries. FAS releases monthly updates for cotton, grain, oilseeds, fruits and vegetables, and world agricultural production and biannual updates on meat and dairy products. Field crop publications are released on the business day following release of the World Agricultural Supply and Demand Estimates (WASDE). Horticultural publications are published at beginning of each month. Coffee and sugar estimates are released twice a year. FAS is experimenting with early release versions of several commodity circulars including cotton, tobacco, and world production. These releases have been popular with users and we plan more early data releases. Find FAS' current commodity information at

<http://www.fas.usda.gov/currwmt.html>

### **Global Agricultural Information Network (Attaché Reports)**

This electronic reporting system, covering all major crop and livestock products, provides timely information to U.S. exporters and commodity analysts and is a resource to aid USDA in determining global production, supply, and demand estimates. It provides information on policies and market demand that affect the sales of U.S. agricultural products worldwide. Reaching beyond traditional commodity reporting, this system also provides updates on high value foods, fishery and forestry products, trade policy monitoring, and sector reports on food processors and the hotel and restaurant industry abroad. The foreign-based staff of FAS submits about 3,000 reports each year. You may register to receive reports on a specific country, commodity, or per single issue. Reports are at FAS Online:

<http://www.fas.usda.gov/scriptsw/faspush/default.asp>

### **AgExporter Magazine**

A monthly magazine for businesses selling farm products overseas, this publication provides tips on exporting, identifies markets with the greatest sales potential and updates readers on major market access issues. A recent edition tackled issues in Indonesia, Japan, and Northern Europe. Register for AgExporter at FAS Online.

<http://www.fas.usda.gov/>

### **Export Sales Report**

Weekly export sales reports serve as a timely early warning system on the possible impact of agricultural obligations on U.S. supplies and prices. The data can be used, for example, to assess the level of export demand, to determine where markets exist, and to assess the relative position of different commodities in those markets. This monitoring system provides a constant stream of up-to-date information on the quantity of U.S. agricultural commodities that are sold abroad.

FAS plans to develop an on-line data query system for the Export Sales Report in 2004. Find the Export Sales Report at: <http://www.fas.usda.gov/export-sales/esrdl.html>

*If you have comments on the information above, please contact Randy Zeitner, Assistant Deputy Administrator for Analysis at (202) 720-7792 or [randy.zeitner@fas.usda.gov](mailto:randy.zeitner@fas.usda.gov)*

## **World Agricultural Outlook Board (WAOB)**

### **Office of the Chief Economist, USDA**

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Comments about World Agricultural Outlook Board programs may be directed to Gerald A. Bange, Chairperson, WAOB, Mail Stop 3812, South Building, USDA, Washington, D.C. 20250-3182; (202) 720-6030; [gbange@oce.usda.gov](mailto:gbange@oce.usda.gov).

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#### **What's New?**

##### **New Quarters for Lockup**

WAOB and NASS offices have relocated to newly renovated and highly secure offices in USDA's South Building. Security features include controlled and monitored access into and within the wing, encrypted telecommunications, and other measures in the lockup area.

##### **Sugar Forecasts Incorporate Processor Data**

The *World Agricultural Supply and Demand Estimates* (WASDE) report includes monthly estimates of U.S. sugar supply and demand. In August 2003, projections of sugar production made by processors and compiled by USDA's Farm Service Agency were adopted as the basis of the monthly WASDE production forecast.

##### **Preparing for Emergency Operations**

WAOB and NASS, which share the same space at USDA headquarters where the lockup reports are prepared and released, are well along in preparations to continue their work at a remote location in the event of emergency. WAOB will have the ability to produce the *World Agricultural Supply and Demand Estimates* report and perform other essential functions following a catastrophic event.

##### **Highlights of Analytical Support and Crop Monitoring**

**BSE.** Following the discovery of BSE in Canada, WAOB prepared a number of quick turn-around analyses on the potential impacts of various ban regimes on imports of Canadian beef and cattle; background material on beef trade between the U.S., Canada, and Asia; and the potential loss of U.S. export markets given various scenarios provided by policymakers.

**U.S. Drought.** The Joint Agricultural Weather Facility, operated by WAOB and the National Weather Service, provided ongoing analysis of domestic livestock and hay and pasture impacts of the 2003 drought and prepared maps used to administer the 2003 Livestock Feed Assistance, Non-fat Dry Milk Program.

**Foreign Crop Shortfall.** JAWF analysts provided early warnings on the impact of a severe drought on wheat production in Ukraine and Russia by three-fourths and one-third, respectively from the previous year.

### **North American Drought Monitor Launched**

Meteorologists from the United States, Mexico, and Canada now issue a monthly North American drought monitor (<http://lwf.ncdc.noaa.gov/oa/climate/monitoring/drought/nadm/>). Although publicly available, the monitor is still experimental. Operational public dissemination is targeted for next year. Meanwhile, WAOB and its partners continue to publish the weekly U.S. Drought Monitor, posted at <http://drought.unl.edu/dm/>, tracking droughts affecting agriculture, water supplies, and fire danger.

## **What's Changed?**

### **EU Trade Reporting Changes**

In July 2003, reporting of European Union (EU-15) oilseed exports and imports in the WASDE report was revised to exclude trade between EU member nations. Historical supply and use estimates for the EU-15 and the world were revised to reflect this change. A similar change was made for EU trade in grains in 2002.

### **Commodity Forecasting Program Strengthened**

WAOB is responsible for administering a memorandum among USDA agencies (OCE, ERS, FAS, AMS) designed to strengthen the Department's commodity economics forecasting. A third annual forum for interagency commodity estimates committees was attended by USDA analysts and managers and invited guests from the private sector and academia.

### **Commodity Market Information System**

Work continues on the development of a one-stop USDA commodity market information portal. Our vision for this website is to provide users of commodity market information with a one-stop source of data, forecasts, and information now available separately from AMS, ERS, FSA, FAS, NASS and the WAOB. During the past year, more than 50 government and private industry information users were interviewed regarding desired information and portal capabilities. A detailed business case has been developed and approved by the Department. Funding has been secured for building an application-based prototype over the next year. The proposed system is one of USDA's high-priority e-government major initiatives.

### **New Weather Data Aids Crop Monitoring**

The Joint Agricultural Weather Facility now receives daily Cooperative Network weather data from about 3,000 stations located in agriculturally important areas of the United States. Provided by the Northeast Regional Climate Center of NOAA, the datastream effectively doubles the amount of daily COOP data available for analysis by staff monitoring crop-weather conditions.

### **Archive of *Weekly Weather and Crop Bulletins* Grows**

The *Weekly Weather and Crop Bulletin* provides extensive detail on U.S. and international crop weather impacts. The *Bulletin* is available on the WAOB home page. The archive of scanned issues at the Mann Library, <http://usda/mannlib.cornell.edu>, now includes issues dating to 1971.



## **What's Coming?**

### **WASDE Release Dates for 2004**

The *World Agricultural Supply and Demand Estimates* Report will be released at 8:30 a.m. Eastern Time on the following dates in 2004: Jan. 10, Feb. 11, Mar. 11, Apr. 10, May 12, June 11, July 11, Aug. 12, Sep. 11, Oct. 10, Nov. 12, Dec. 11.

### **Agricultural Outlook Forum 2004**

Sharpen your strategy for 2004 by attending the annual agricultural outlook forum, February 19-20, 2004, in Arlington, Virginia. The program will highlight 2004 farm and commodity prospects and the top issues faced by American farmers. Top USDA officials will open the meeting on February 19 with an overview of agricultural prospects for 2004. Leading analysts will be on hand to debate planting, trade, and price prospects for farm commodities in the year ahead. Attendees will receive a set of new USDA long-term commodity projections to 2013.

The agenda will include ample time for networking at this popular event, which attracted more than 1,300 people last February.

## **WAOB Data and Products**

### **WASDE Report**

The *World Agricultural Supply and Demand Estimates* report is posted first at the WAOB home page: [www.usda.gov/oce/waob/wasde/wasde.htm](http://www.usda.gov/oce/waob/wasde/wasde.htm). You'll find it a short time later on the USDA Economics and Statistics System: <http://usda.mannlib.cornell.edu>. You can download and read the WASDE report in either Adobe Acrobat format or in plain text format.

Prefer getting reports by e-mail? You can request free e-mail subscriptions to any report issued by WAOB, ERS, or NASS. The reports are automatically sent shortly after release. Go to: <http://www.usda.mannlib.cornell.edu>, click on "reports by e-mail."

### **Daily Weather Update**

A national summary of agricultural weather impacts is posted each weekday morning at <http://www.usda.gov/agency/oce/waob/jawf>.

### **Crop Handbook Available on the Internet**

Major World Crop Areas and Climatic Profiles is a popular reference for tracking crop production around the world. Maps, climate and production data are shown for many crops and countries. Updated portions with interactive maps are available at <http://www.usda.gov/oce/waob/jawf/profiles/mwcacp.htm>

### **Historical Data Disk**

An archive of historical monthly supply and demand estimates back to 1973, "WASDE Crop, Livestock, and Dairy Estimates," is now available in spreadsheet form on disk from ERS-NASS (1-800-999-6779). This database also can be downloaded from <http://usda.mannlib.cornell.edu>.

## **USDA Data User Meeting**

### **October 20, 2003**

### **Questions and Comments**

EDITOR'S NOTE 1: Following is a summary of the discussion during the Open Forum of this year's meeting. A synopsis of each comment or question is provided, along with a synopsis of the response given. Since there were a few major themes to the discussion, the summary is organized by the following topics: Mandatory Price Reporting System reports and procedures, WAOB procedures for *WASDE* reports, FAS country data and trad data, *Crop Progress* reports and procedures, NASS *Dairy Product Prices* and *Monthly Hog and Pig* reports, and other topics. The material is basically presented in chronological order within each topic.

#### **Mandatory Price Reporting System Reports and Procedures**

EDITOR'S NOTE 2: The first several questions and comments about AMS reports pertained to grading and grade percentage. The following provides an explanation of how each of these reports is compiled.

The data for the NW\_LS196 *USDA National Steer and Heifer Estimated Grading Percent Report* are collected from two sources. The first source of data, which is obtained from the USDA Meat Grading Branch, includes the actual breakdown by quality and yield grade for all cattle graded. The second source of data is collected from WA\_LS713 *Slaughter by Region* and WA\_LS714 *Slaughter by State* reports released by USDA, NASS. These two sources are compared to each other to provide the breakdown by percentages of how slaughter steers and heifers are grading by quality and yield grade on a regional and state basis.

One of the sections of the NW\_LS410 *USDA Beef Carcass Price Equivalent Index Value* is the Grading Percent Breakdown. This breakdown is compiled from three different reports: 1. NW\_LS196 *Grading Percent Report*; 2. WA\_LS711 *Actual Slaughter Report*; 3. LM\_XB459 *National Weekly Boxed Beef Cutout and Box Beef Cuts Report*.

One of the sections of the LM\_XB463 *National Comprehensive Boxed Beef Cutout Report* is total load count by quality grade of boxed beef sold. These data are collected by USDA, Market News from packers who slaughter more than 125,000 yearly according to LMR Act.

Question: What percent of the animals in the Weekly Grading Report are not graded?

Response: It would be necessary to check with the Grading Branch.

Question: How is the percent not graded adjusted? It is weekly or seasonal?

Response: The report includes all animals that received a grade. There are no adjustments.

Comment: Today's report gave a different indication of total cattle than other sources. It appears to account for only 80-85% of total animals.

Response: AMS takes the grade data for the regions and weights these data up to National totals. This usually ends up with 90-95% coverage. The others are not graded because they are of low quality or sold as yield grade only.

Comment: By not factoring up to the total, it seems as if we are understating the true quality. Taken another way, perhaps he is feeding for about 10% better quality than needed.

Response: The cut out values are based only on the animals going into the cut out calculations so they always come back to 100%.

Comment: He has been away from the Great Plains for a while but it seems that those reports don't account for the full quality.

Response: Its been a while since he has tried to reconcile across various reports.

Question: Ever since the Mandatory Price Reporting (MPR) System came into operation it seems as if the relationship between animal prices and carcass values has changed. Are there some animals dropped out of MPR?

Response 1: We are seeing that more boxed beef is now trading on a formula basis which pulls volume away from negotiated sales. There are some types of transactions that do not fit the current reporting categories, so those transactions are not reported.

Response 2: If MPR is not renewed, we will lose a lot of information such as composite cut out values. AMS has developed a lot of procedures to maximize the amount of information which can be published under MPR.

Comment: He has also noticed the same apparent missing volume. Sometimes you are apparently getting an indication as low as 36% choice.

In the "5 Area Report," under week to date sales, you can find aggregate accumulations for cash sales and price to be determined. Numbers are seeming to decline. It seems as if packers are handling more on a price to be determined basis.

Response: AMS is trying to measure total movement in those aggregate numbers. However, there can be some confusion. For example, some cattle could be purchased to be put back on feed. Some cattle just don't fit the definitions, such as Holsteins. AMS hopes to be able to move negotiated grid cattle to negotiated cash. Auditors are checking all plants. They audit all purchases and all sales. They are using cattle slaughter as the basis of comparison for audits.

AMS does leave out the portion that can't be fit into the definitions. For example, some animals traded in these different arrangements show up with prices in the mid \$80's when most sales are in the \$90's.

Comment: In examining boxed beef weight totals he finds a "light choice" category is helpful even if the animals were not light cattle.

Response: AMS is considering just one choice and one select cut out but that might not happen. AMS will consider analysts concerns before making a change.

Question: For the prices on the LS410 Report are the red meat yield or carcass yield the ratio of cash price to meat prices?

Response: The Des Moines office is looking at new formats for showing relationships.

Comment: More information is needed on how to use the MPR data. For example, how are contracted products handled if they were bought last week, priced about Thanksgiving, and actually delivered in mid December?

Response: The data are entered into the system **when** priced.

Comment: There seems to be some data slipping through the cracks in the MPR Swine Reports. The morning report covers purchases up to 9:00 a.m. and the afternoon report covers purchases from 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. Many of the packer's transactions (after 1:00 p.m.), thus only show up in the prior day report when it comes out.

Response: The MPR law was very specific on times and report contents and AMS has followed those specifications. These types of inconsistencies could be addressed when the act is revisited in 2004. Changes might make it easier to look at slaughter compared to purchases.

Comment: When you ask for MPR Daily Reports, you can find data for the last year but not a time series.

Response: That is correct. The current search engine only goes back for one year. Altering that is one of the improvements being put on the list for new programming by the contractor.

Question: AMS does a good job of getting data issued from the MPR system. When is the date reported for sales? Are they at the discretion of sellers?

Response: No, a transaction must be reported when the price is established or when an agreement on the method to establish the price is agreed upon.

Comment: It appears that much of the cow beef data shows up a day or so later even though they are sold in the morning.

Response: The MPR Act and Regulations were primarily written for steers and heifers and don't work well for cow and bull beef. There also is a confidentiality impact since cow and bull trades often need to be "rolled-up" over multiple days to avoid disclosing individual companies.

Question: Part of the MPR system requested ERS to analyze scanners and develop a scanner derived retail meat price as an alternative to the Bureau of Labor Statistics market-based approach. With the sunset of the MPR legislation, what will happen in 2003 and is it a "hot potato" at USDA?

Response: ERS will publish the requested data through 2004 but ERS is not normally a data collection agency. It is assumed that the data collection will continue.

### **WAOB Procedures for *WASDE* Reports**

Comment: There is sometimes frustration that users have to deal with projections for the current crop and the next year at the same time. Monthly forecasts seem to vary considerably, perhaps due to foreign production, but they seem to have stabilized now.

Response: The first WAOB projections for the current year crop came out in May based on the *March Prospective Plantings* Report from NASS. Subsequent June and July productions come out before NASS can forecast production based on actual surveys. The early projections start with trend yields and then additional models are

considered. Interagency committee members have found that the record yield year of 1994 is greatly affecting analyses.

Question: Why did WAOB raise corn acres in the June *WASDE* when NASS *Acreage* three weeks later took acreage back down?

Response: Based on early season condition and early corn plantings many models indicated that farmers would probably plant more acres than anticipated in March. The Interagency Crop Estimating Committee felt strong enough about the probable increase to include it as the “best” projection available in June.

Comment: The WAOB decision in *July’s Supply and Demand* report to project a 10.3 billion corn crop reduced price about 20 cents since it was not supported by the NASS August 1 forecasts.

Response: Early season conditions supported increasing the projection. NASS is now forecasting a record corn crop.

Question: There has been a fair amount of discussion this year of the soybean S&D residual. Was the 130 million ending stocks figure a real calculation or a feeling that 130 is the absolute minimum?

Response: There has been a lot of controversy. Based on crushings to date and China’s interest in imports, the Interagency Committee felt that ending stocks might be as low as 130, which is essentially “pipeline.” If you get below a fixed point, some plants just couldn’t operate.

Question on the Question: Was the 130 ending stocks estimate too low or too high?

Response: The question was based on the fact that 44% of the exports came in early and it seemed that more stocks might disappear.

Response to Original question: The task of the Interagency Committee is to consider all perspectives on disappearance, seasonal effects, etc. The committee looks at data as if through a rear view mirror. That is, based on conditions and data to date what features need to happen the rest of the marketing year to result in various ending stocks levels? The August WAOB report came in at 155 (even though there were some opinions that

they could be 100 or lower) but the final NASS stocks came out at 169.

Comment: The Interagency Committee approach is looking at the international market place. When the committee looks at the end point, it doesn't take into account that we need to ration in order to not disappear too much supply.

Response: How could the committee send a message to ration?

Question? How did the Interagency Committee come to the season average price? Doesn't it seem we have a dynamic inconsistency?

Response 1: The final season average price is the NASS average price received by farmers. The committee does look at historic movements during the season to project from prices to date to the season average.

Response 2: Early in the year, the season average price has an extremely wide range because it is difficult to interpret all of the factors that will eventually determine that year's actual price. However, even with a wide range many people still just use the midpoint as **the** price projection.

Question: If the committee had numbers earlier, would they do better on season average price?

Response: Possibly not, since the committee has all kinds of scenarios and discards most of them.

Question: Does each crop get the same attention? He feels WAOB has been lagging the high rice exports.

Response: There is an ICEC for rice, just as much attention is paid to rice as any other major commodity. This year for rice was one with great increase in exports all year. Thus, many people were surprised by the level of the NASS ending stocks.

Comment: WAOB/USDA should always focus on reporting what they really think and not send a message about rationing supply.

Response: There is no effort by anyone in USDA to manipulate markets. WAOB is trying to estimate the cumulative effect by the end of the year, not drive price movements.

Comment: As a former outside user he did not realize how much information USDA does use and how many people are involved until he took a USDA position. There is a great institutional memory built into the system and he found out the system works even better than what he could have expected.

Question: After the discussion earlier on “feathering” the May, June, and July WASDE Crop Productions, can we expect even more of this?

Response: The Interagency Committees did have solid models which showed that acreage and yields increase when corn planting is early. The committees will continue to look for such solid models.

In 1993, with the Midwest flood, the WAOB would have been deservedly criticized if we had not departed from trend yields. The WAOB does not want to “whipsaw” or disrupt the market or be irrelevant.

Question: Is it correct that no attache reports for cotton in China have been issued since June?

Response 1: That doesn’t sound reasonable. There are multiple posts in China that report and you need to make sure that you are listing all posts for a country.

Response 2: China is a lock-up country for cotton so there have been data coming into the WAOB process as well as considerable communication with the China FAS posts. However, it is not clear if those communications were included in an attache report. All monthly reports should have been included unless they feel it will impact market near lock-up time.

Follow-up: The most recent attaché report from China concerning cotton received via the Gains Reporting System prior to the conference was the Cotton Annual Report dated June 5, 2003.

Question: He has been doing his China projections and feels that he has to raise China stocks or revise exports. What does USDA see?

Response: China has not been as forthcoming as we would like with their balance sheets. One reason is that multiple agencies are involved in constructing balance sheets. Thus, China’s balance sheets may not be logically consistent.

There are other reasons for lack of information:



1. Accounting for all factors in China is a daunting task. China is such a large country that 7 million enumerators were required for their Ag Census.
2. There has not been a total shift to free release of economic information; politics still plays a role.
3. We believe China is withholding some data. USDA keeps reminding them of the WTO reporting requirements.

### **FAS Country Data and Trade Data**

Question: Is there any way to track Brazil and Argentina exports (how much, when, and to where)?

Response: There has been a meteoric increase in Brazil and Argentina production. The Argentina data are quick and easy to track on a web site. Brazil data are much harder to find and they might be only in Portuguese, but there is a private source which does provide information for a fee.

Follow-up: FAS is funding some work aimed at getting better Brazil/Argentina export data.

Question: In the PS&D's, new data are entered only about every six months and they are often quite dated. Will the Market Information Source for the Americas that AMS is working on have better data?

Response 1: That system will include weekly U.S. data, but will also include monthly reports during the growing season for foreign data. The Market Information Organization of the Americas is a market news reporting project, but PS&D reports are the responsibility of FAS.

Response 2: All FAS country reports are on-line. Many of the reports each month are represented in the *World Crop Production Report*. Thus, each country is not in the report every month but a country like Australia, with many commodities, is included monthly.

Question: In comparing the USDA Export Indication reports with the Census data there were considerable differences in the first four months of the 02/03 year for soybeans. Will that be expected to recur in 03/04?

Response: Analysis showed that the discrepancies had to do with one country. Census worked with USDA analysts to review the USDA data and will now consult with USDA each month.

- Question: Being able to access weekly beef exports the past 2 years has been appreciated. What about weekly beef imports? Are there data by country such as Australia, Canada, etc.?
- Response: The Census Trade Data office can give out all published data.
- Comment: The Export Sales report seems to be getting farther away from actual trades.
- Question: Why is there not a country coarse grain total feature in the PS&D's? He can get regional totals but can't make the countries add to the region.
- Response: There is no coarse grain data base established and tracked. To get the regional totals, the 5 grains are added together with millet and mixed grains. On the web site there is a box to click which will summarize the coarse grains.
- Comment: A year ago there was a west coast dock strike. ERS and Census were asked but no one seem to know if any cotton was backed up due to the strike. It is recommended that an inspection for cotton exports report be started similar to the grains report.
- Question: He might check attache reports from day to day and find that the information for commodities within specific countries are not the same. Would this be because of differences in receipt dates versus release dates?
- Response 1: The release date is three days after the receipt date and non USDA data users should not see any data until the release date.
- Response 2: The overseas FAS office may issue an update that gets incorporated and changes the original posted attache report.

### ***Crop Progress Reports and Procedures***

- Proposal: The past USDA actions to shift the *Crop Production* and *WASDE* timing to mornings and to work with the livestock industry to provide Friday reports have been appreciated. The *Crop Progress* report has been criticized since it reflects a mixture of Friday and Monday responses and its timing means that the information cannot be traded on until the next trading day.

It is suggested that the report could be improved if all data were collected on Monday through Tuesday morning and the report released on Wednesday morning before markets open in the U.S. Would USDA consider a new structure for the report?

Comment: From a data user standpoint, the proposal might help in minimizing the “weekend” impact but the crop condition data might not be improved without more attention and consistency from the reporters. He has interviewed some crop progress reporters and found that they are inconsistent - - and often have not gotten out into fields to determine condition.

Question: Since the purpose of the report is to measure crop progress, do reporters do a better job of measuring progress?

Response: Reporters are more consistent in evaluating crop progress but tend to be “chasing the progress.” Again, they are not in the field often enough.

Question: If the crop condition data are not consistent, should NASS just drop the collection?

Response: While the data often do not relate to the actual yield levels in some years the analyst feels the data should not be dropped.

Comment: Data users are looking for some information in order to anticipate upcoming forecasts. While the crop condition data are not perfect predictors of yield levels, there is still information value and should be continued.

Comment: The experience with the *Monthly Hog Report* indicated that having more data is not always better.

Question: Why doesn’t NASS use their paid enumerators as crop condition reporters?

Response 1: Some State Statistical Offices do use enumerators as reporters to fill in gaps in counties if there are not consistent reports from Extension, FSA, or NRCS individuals who are the bulk of the reporters.

Response 2: The enumerators who work on NASS surveys are not Federal employees and are working through a National contract. They also are paid only while working. NASS needs to avoid implying that they should travel around just to serve as a crop progress reporter. Many of them are out in their areas almost daily and do not mind sharing their opinions each week.

Comment: He finds the *Weekly Crop Progress* to be a useful qualitative measure of the crop and doesn't use it in a quantitative estimator.

Comment 2: He gets good information from the *Crop Progress* by focusing on the US level and not State by State. Crop condition indications have value, and should take them as they are, since they provide advance warning of what is happening.

Comment: The earlier comment on using the crop conditions at the U.S. level are fine for some data users but the merchandise and transportation people need to have regional data. You might say national data sets the price but state data drives marketing. State level data provides information for grain movement.

Comment: WAOB is a major user of NASS data. The Interagency process uses crop condition reports. In addition, the ICEC's use other models between May and June until NASS can start the survey based forecasts in August.

Comment: State condition data should not be ignored, but must be used with more judgement.

Question: Does WAOB look at crop conditions after August 1?

Response: Yes, since the Interagency Committees must make their final decisions within just an hour or two when NASS delivers the current forecast within lock-up, the committees calculate a wide range of scenarios ahead of time. Some of the models utilize crop condition data.

Question (to group): Are there any new comments or suggestions related to the proposed crop progress timing change suggested earlier? (None were received)

Crop Progress Pledge: NASS will examine the various aspects related to the requested crop progress timing change, such as:

1. Could this change reduce the weekend gap affect?
2. Are there any statutes or regulations calling for the full weekly weather crop bulletin to come out on Wednesdays?
3. How could the volume of reports still coming in by mail be handled?
4. Would this timing allow western states to make telephone contacts with non reporters?

5. Would it be possible to issue the narrative weather-crop summary by noon ET on Wednesdays if the Crop Progress was issued at 8:30 a.m. ET?

**NASS *Dairy Products Prices and Monthly Hogs and Pigs* reports**

Question: For the weekly dairy product prices, could NASS pick up movement to government supplies?

Response: AMS determines the products and specifications that NASS collects data for in the weekly dairy products prices survey. NASS would work with AMS if other data breaks would be needed.

Question: Could NASS comment on the Dairy Product Prices and mandatory collection?

Response: When the mandatory program went into effect, NASS reviewed all production data to determine which plants met the product definitions. Only those plants with a million or more pounds of products are contacted. Currently all plants are reporting.

Comments: NASS should be thanked for really trying to make the *Monthly Hogs and Pigs* report work.

Data users need to get on board on the MPR re-authorization. A good piece of legislation is needed for congress to vote on.

**Other Topics**

Comment 1: NASS and WAOB should be complimented for being responsive in adjusting to new data.

Comment 2: He often creates livestock charts. He can get historic data from the Red Meats Yearbook. However, to bring the data up to date he might need to use data from 8-12 Livestock, Dairy and Poultry (LDP) Situation and Outlook Reports. The narratives in LDP vary in length so the data tables don't fall on the same pages each month. Perhaps a list of tables with page numbers could be added.

Response: It should be possible to just select the tables electronically. Tables are posted each month on the web.

Comment: USDA is doing a good job of making data more available. Modes vary from printed to on-line. Many data sources are in PDF format which look great but the individual data elements can't be grabbed. A corresponding text or data base mode should be available for each PDF report.

Response: NASS and WAOB reports are available in multiple formats and most other USDA reports are moving in that direction. The new Commodity Marketing Information System will be able to grab and create downloadable files for data from six or more USDA agencies.

Question: There have been big hits on State Government budgets and there may be even bigger problems in the future. What has been the impact on the Market News Service and how will budget problems affect special NASS reports like Equine?

Response 1: The State budget cuts and loss of State Market reporters have particularly affected the coverage of auction market data. In general, AMS has not been able to bail out the states. They can not hire Federal market reporters who might be working just one or two days a week. AMS has taken some actions to ensure receiving data for specific locations that are important to feeder cattle supply.

Response 2: All NASS State Offices work through Federal-State cooperative agreements which may provide for state paid space, state employees to work in the office, and special reports. The number of State employees across the country has gone from 250 to 225 to 200 and is down to about 180 now. There also are fewer resources available for funding existing state special reports as well as cutting back on any new reports.

Response 3: There also is a tightening in Federal budgets. That has affected the ability of FAS to keep their staff up in many countries. FAS has been paying for some data in foreign countries, which the USDA employees evaluate before submitting, but there are fewer funds to pay for those services.

Response 4: Foreign data are increasingly difficult to obtain due to budget issues.

Comment: It would be helpful if Census Bureau could measure corn millings the same way that soybean crushings are covered. Data series are needed for categories such as wet and dry corn milling. Also need a better sense of disappearance.

Comment: Per capita calculations are suffering since Census Bureau has not revised its series based on 2000 population estimates. USDA needs to "carry the water" in encouraging Census Bureau to revise and post its revised population series.

Response: The Census Bureau should be contacted for more information concerning the population census.

Question: Can more light be shed on the decision to utilize FSA data for reviewing harvested acres in October? He contacted FSA offices for cotton data in early August and was told that some States didn't have the data. He was then surprised that NASS did adjust cotton acres in September. Similarly he contacted all FSA offices in late September and got different responses. Some had their data but others said they don't have the data and wouldn't have for a couple of months.

Response 1: It is not clear what the FSA release policy is for data during the year. NASS has been working directly with FSA and is able to tabulate data to date for each state each week through the Kansas City processing office. Data were leveling off by late September, without week to week spikes in the volume, so NASS went ahead with the "truing up" of acreage in the *October Crop Production* report.

Response 2: All states are included in the FSA data sets that NASS is pulling off. Since compliance dates vary from south to north acreage totals stabilize at different times. NASS is not authorized to release the FSA data that we have. Some FSA state offices may be planning to pull together their data for the "Total Farm Acreage report in December which is why they said they will not have data for a couple of months. The FSA state offices may not have thought of extracting the data from Kansas City.

Question: There has been speculation for weeks on when the Canada beef gates will open again. Could there be a weekly announcement on the status of decision making?

Response: USDA is in the process of rule making on imports of live animals. That would mean that APHIS would need to publish rules for public comment. Thus, there is little chance of a surprise announcement. Currently, animals under 30 days of age are coming into the U.S. from Canada.

Question: Will we get back to the top 20 states for dairy, not just the selected states?

Response: The top 20 states has been based on the numbers of cows but NASS would like to shift to the top 20 **production** states. Based on 2002 levels this would add Colorado, Oregon, and Kansas, while dropping Kentucky, Missouri, and Virginia. NASS will continue to evaluate and will decide if a change is warranted when census data becomes available.

Comment: He would agree about adding in the growing states.

Response: There is a definite western movement.

Question: Is it correct that producers might get an advanced counter cyclical payment?

Response: FSA does use NASS monthly prices and WAOB interpretations of what prices will do to the rest of the year. People should watch for an upcoming announcement.

Question: Could NASS include information on how many objective yield plots have been harvested by October 1 and November 1?

Response: This is one request that NASS has not considered. It will be looked at.